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SOME PARALLELS TO *BARTHOLOMEW FAIR*

The opinion seems generally current that Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* is entirely original.¹ I think, however, it can be shown that for his plot Jonson took suggestions from at least one other play, and that he made free use of the literature of roguery. The comic retribution that overtakes Waspé after he has ridiculed Bartholomew Cokes for the loss of two purses was more than probably suggested by the old play of *Sir Thomas More*, and Jonson apparently drew from the same source for his treatment of the cutpurse scenes. Moreover, many of the jest books, lives of rogues, pamphlets on coney-catching, and miscellaneous tracts of Jonson's day illustrate *Bartholomew Fair* and often furnish rather close parallels, so that there is little doubt that Jonson, though the stage-keeper's charge that he did not "hit the humours" of the fair² is hardly just, owed as much to his vast reading in every field as to his own invention or to his knowledge of the fair. It is only in this play of *Sir Thomas More*, however, that I have found a main motive and situation of *Bartholomew Fair* combined with many of its details.

The fact that *Sir Thomas More* was not published till 1844 gives rise to the question whether Jonson knew the play. *Bartholomew Fair* itself furnishes the best evidence that he did. There is also probably a hint of *Sir Thomas More* in *The Silent Woman* when Morose, seeing Mrs. Otter beating Otter, exclaims:

Mistress Mary Ambree, your examples are dangerous. Rogues, hell-hounds, Stentors! out of my doors, you sons of noise and tumult, begot on an ill May-day.³

Gifford takes this to refer to the London riots of May-day, 1517, which are celebrated in the play of *Sir Thomas More* and in a

¹ Cf. Ward, *Hist. of Eng. Dram. Lit.*, Vol. II, p. 370, and Koepfel, *Quellen-Studien zu den Dramen B. J.*, etc., p. 14.

² *B. F.* Induction, *Jonson's Works*, Vol. II, p. 143. References to Jonson's works are to the Gifford-Cunningham three-volume edition (London, 1904). *Bartholomew Fair* is in the second volume, pp. 141-210. References to *Sir Thomas More* are by page to Dyce's edition for the Shakespeare Society (London, 1844).

³ *Sil. Wom.*, IV, 1, *Works*, I, 438.

ballad, "The Story of Ill May-Day." If, as is probable, Morose's expression, "ill May-day," involves not merely a hostile attitude to May-day but a reference to the London riots, Jonson doubtless had in mind the play and not the ballad or historical accounts; for one of the leaders of the May-day riots, appearing in the play and not elsewhere, is Doll Williamson, a fighting woman of the same type as Mary Ambree. For the fictitious Doll, Jonson might not unnaturally have substituted a name well known to his hearers and celebrated elsewhere in his work. Negatively, the date of *Sir Thomas More* was not so early nor its probable popularity so slight as to be evidence against Jonson's knowledge of the play. From internal evidence conclusions have been drawn placing the date of the play around 1590 or as late as 1595 in parts.¹ The cutpurse scenes, which evidently belong to the older part of the play, are based on the incident given, apparently for the first time, in the earliest published life of More, that of Stapleton's *Tres Thomae*, 1588. Moreover, parts of the play belong to so advanced a stage in the development of the drama that some good critics have judged them to be the work of Shakespeare.² Furthermore, the revision, the occurrence of an actor's name in the manuscript,³ and the elaborate changes made by Tyllney, Master of the Revels (1579-1610), for performance, emphasize the connection of the play with the stage.

The part of *Sir Thomas More* that has the elements of Jonson's cutpurse scenes is the second scene according to Dyce's edition, a short one covering pp. 6-13. *Bartholomew Fair* offers a parallel to nearly every detail, and, while some of the parallels

¹ Dyce, *Sir Th. M.*, Preface; Simpson, 4 *N. and Q.*, VIII, 1 ff.; Fleay, *Biog. Chron. Eng. Drama*, II, p. 312, and *Life and Work of Sh.*, pp. 27, 127, 292, 293; Schelling, *Eng. Chron. Play*, p. 211. The determination of the date of *Sir Thomas More* would possibly have some bearing on the source of the mob scenes in *The First Part of the Contention*, in 2 *Henry VI*, and in *Julius Caesar*. The attitude of the mob at first in *Sir Thomas More*, the indication of veering in the midst of More's arguments, the complete turn of the mob at the end, the genuine oratorical tone of More's speech, the sharp contrast between this and the talk of the leaders of the mob, and many details in language are similar to *Julius Caesar* especially. (See Simpson's article and compare *Sir Th. M.*, p. 29, ll. 6, 7, and *Jul. Caes.*, III, 1, ll. 271-74, etc.)

² Ward, *Hist. Eng. Dram. Lit.*, II, pp. 214, 215; Simpson, 4 *N. and Q.*, VIII, pp. 1 ff.; Spedding, 4 *N. and Q.*, X, pp. 227 f.

³ *Sir Th. M.*, p. 53, n. 1. The same name occurs in the plot of Tarlton's *Seven Deadly Sins* (Collier, *Hist. Eng. Dram. Poetry and Stage* [1879], III, pp. 198 ff.); see Fleay, *Life and Work of Sh.*, pp. 23, 264-66, 296. Cf. *Sir Th. M.*, p. 59, n. 3, for another name preserved in the play.

are very slight or commonplace, I have mentioned them all, giving the passages that are most closely akin.

1. The scene in *Sir Thomas More* opens with a censure not of the cutpurse but of his victim. Sir Thomas More, the Lord Mayor, Suresbie, and other justices are trying the case of Lifter for cutting the purse of Smart. Suresbie, obtaining leave to speak, delivers a severe lecture to Smart. This situation occurs twice in *Bartholomew Fair*. When Cokes loses his first purse, Waspé cries out:

Are you not justly served, in your conscience now, speak in your conscience?¹

and at the loss of the second purse, Waspé turns upon Cokes with a still severer censure:

You are an ass, sir, . . . they are such retchless flies as you are, that blow cut-purses abroad in every corner; your foolish having of money makes them.²

"Justly served" of Waspé's first attack may be compared with the only phrase preserved in an imperfect line at the end of Suresbie's speech, "rightlie seru'de." The wording of the second attack is similar to that in the preceding part of Suresbie's censure:

. . . Thou art a foolish fellowe.

What makes so many pilferers and fellows,
But such fond baites that foolish people lay
To tempt the needie miserable wretche?³

2. In the plan that is laid in both plays to bring the censure home to the censurer, the same details come out.

After Suresbie's rebuke of Smart, More, obtaining his whispered request from the Lord Mayor, sends out all but Lifter, whose life he then offers to save on the condition that he repeat his performance by cutting Suresbie's purse. More overcomes Lifter's distrust and fear of the consequences by revealing a secret knowledge of some of Lifter's past crimes, and thus makes his life doubly the reward of success in the jest. Lifter consents, boasting of his ability to accomplish the robbery, and he is com-

¹ *B. F.*, II, 1, *Works*, II, 169.

² *B. F.*, III, 1, *Works*, II, 179.

³ *Sir Th. M.*, pp. 6, 7.

manded to bring the purse to More. In *Bartholomew Fair*, as Waspe and Cokes leave the scene of the second robbery, Quarlous, who is left with the cutpurse Edgworth as More was with Lifter, calls Edgworth and imposes upon him the task of robbing Waspe of a box taken from Cokes for safekeeping. Quarlous has seen Edgworth rob Cokes of his purse and uses the knowledge to make him consent, promising as a reward for his success not to betray him. Edgworth, boasting of his skill, offers to bring only the contents of the box and is told to do so.

3. In the downfall of the overconfident man, who seeks his troubles and runs into the toils, there is also a likeness in the two plays.

To Suresbie, who is sent in by More after Lifter has consented to cut his purse, Lifter makes a declaration of his own innocence, and then he proceeds to tell of the tricks of more skilful cutpurses than himself. One statement of his ought to put Suresbie on guard, but he is so bent on knowing the tricks of cutpurses in order to catch the rogues that he is blind to the situation. He longs to know the tricks of the trade, and in an aside Lifter promises him his desire. Through this self-confidence and eagerness to match the cutpurses, he permits Lifter to draw him on, and runs into the toils, losing his purse even while he is boasting of his ability to keep it. This incident is worked into the robbery of both Waspe and Cokes, but it is more fully elaborated in the case of Cokes, appearing in all of its details. There Nightingale, coming in to rob Cokes a second time,¹ tells Cokes that he sings his "Caveat against Cut-purses" that he may be held guiltless if a purse is cut in his presence. This suggests Lifter's declaration of innocence as a prelude to a well-planned robbery. When Nightingale sings his song, telling, as Lifter tells Suresbie, of the deeds of the cutpurses and of their boldness, Cokes like Suresbie is deceived and led on, rather than warned. Then comes the desire of Cokes, which is ironically fulfilled, to pit himself against the cutpurses.

A comparison of language shows to what extent the "humours" of the characters correspond. Suresbie's eagerness comes out in

¹ *B. F.*, III, 1, *Works*, II, 176.

his questions about the cutpurses, which follow Lifter's description of their tricks:

Tell me what are they? where they may be caught?

I, those are they I looke for.

Then Lifter promises:

And you shall haue your longing ere ye goe.¹

Suresbie's remark just before he discovers that he has already been robbed is:

But let them gull me, widgen me, rooke me, foppe me,

Yfaith, yfaith, they are too short for me.

Knaues and fooles meete when purses goe;

Wise men looke to their purses well enough.²

So Cokes calls for the cutpurses again and again until he gets his desire. After the loss of his first purse, he shows another and says:

Let him catch this that catch can. I would fain see him get this, look you here.

I will put it just where the other was, and if we have good luck, you shall see a delicate fine trap to catch the cut-purse nibbling.

Edgworth overhears and promises as Lifter did:

Faith, and he'll try ere you be out o' the Fair.³

Nightingale's song recalls Cokes to his desire and makes it only the more insistent. He prays Nightingale to raise him one or two. As Nightingale sings, "Look to your purses," Cokes cries, "Ha, ha, this chimes! Good counsel at first dash;" and when Nightingale comes to "beware of the cut-purse so bold," Cokes echoes his previous remark, "Well said! he were to blame that would not, i' faith." Holding his hand on his purse, Cokes reiterates his desire, and at last breaks out:

A pox on them, that they will not come! that a man should have such a desire to a thing, and want it!

Especially in view of the fact that the audience knows of the cut-purse's determination to gull the boaster, Jonson's prolonged preparation for the climax must have made this part of *Bartholomew Fair* much more entertaining than the original, where the dare of

¹ *Sir Th. M.*, p. 10.

² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³ *B. F.*, II, 1, *Works*, II, 169, 170.

the cocksure justice, the acceptance by the cutpurse, and the downfall follow each other too rapidly for the tension of expectancy to reach its keenest point. A remark of Quarlous, much in the spirit of Lifter's and Edgworth's promises, indicates the eagerness that the scene in *Bartholomew Fair* produces with the spectators, and prepares for the success of the cutpurse and for his acceptance as a comic hero. "'Fore God," Quarlous declares, "I'd give half the Fair, an 'twere mine, for a cut-purse for him, to save his longing." Then Cokes, flourishing his purse once more and putting it up, exclaims ironically, "I am an ass, I cannot keep my purse!" and is robbed the next moment,¹ as Suresbie was robbed at the climax of his self-confidence. In working up the robbery of Waspe, Jonson has used only the same motive, omitting many details and changing others. The same humor, however, that Suresbie shows when he declares that only fools lose purses, leads Waspe to say, as he takes the box away from Cokes after Cokes's second loss.²

But give me this from you in the meantime; I beseech you, see if I can look to this,

and immediately after,

Why! because you are an ass.³

4. In the two plays the discovery of the loss is made in the same way.

Suresbie finds his purse missing when, in response to a suggestion of More's, he is about to make a contribution to the funeral

¹ *B. F.*, II, 1, *Works*, 176, 178.

² In the "Merry Frolics or the Comical Cheats of Swalpo," etc. (Ashton, *Chap-books of the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 337 ff.) there is an account of a pickpocket who, performing set tasks, picks a nobleman's pocket of a watch carefully guarded, by tickling him under the ear, as Cokes is robbed in *Bartholomew Fair* the second time. The preceding task of Swalpo had been to steal the coat off the nobleman's back. Compare Cokes's loss of his coat in the third robbery. In another work, also published after Jonson's play, *Bartholomew Faire, or Variety of fancies*, etc., 1641 (reprinted in Ashbee's *Fac-simile Reprints*, No. 1, and in Hindley's *Old Book Coll. Misc.*, Vol. III) we have an exact description of this third robbery of Cokes. The passage reads: "Some of your cutpurses are in fee with cheating costermongers, who have a trick now and then to throw downe a basket of refuge peares, which prove cloake-peares to those that shall loose their hats or cloaks in striving who shall gather fastest!" (p. 4). Besides, there is in the same pamphlet an account of a Puritan who attacks the pictures of Christ and his disciples and is put in the stocks, and a fairly exact copy of Ursula and Mooncalf: "In the pig-market, alias Pasty-nooke or Pye corner, . . . pigges are al houres of the day on the stalls piping hot . . . the fat greasy H[o]stesse instructs Nick Froth her tapster, to aske a shilling more for a pigs head of a woman big with child, in regard of her longing," etc. (p. 5).

³ *B. F.*, III, 1, *Works*, II, 179.

expenses of the condemned prisoners, including Lifter, who has robbed him. Cokes, too, discovers his loss upon the moment of paying the money for the ballads to Nightingale, who has helped rob him. Each cries out with the same surprise, "My purse is gone." When Lifter is questioned by Suresbie, he says,

Suspect ye me, sir? Oh, what a world is this!

And More, continuing the jest, says:

But that the poore man is a prisoner,
It would be now suspected that he had it.¹

So Nightingale seems inclined to play upon the victim when he says to Cokes, who has just discovered his second loss, "I hope you suspect not me, sir?" Edgworth adds, much in the vein of More but with the intention of hurrying Nightingale away with the purse, which has been turned over to him:

Thee! that were a jest indeed! dost thou think the gentleman is foolish? where hadst thou hands, I pray thee? Away, ass, away!²

5. In the moral that is brought home to the censurer the plays agree.

When Suresbie discovers the loss of his purse, More censures him in exactly the same words that he himself had used in condemning Smart for tempting the cutpurses, and the Lord Mayor adds:

Beleeue me, Master Suresbie, this is straunge,
You, beeing a man so settled in assurance,
Will fall in that which you condemnd in other.³

¹ *Sir Th. M.*, p. 12.

² *B. F.*, III, 1, *Works*, II, 179; *Mery Tales and Quicke Answeres* (ed. Hazlitt), No. XCV, "Of him that desired to be set vpon the pillori," gives a close parallel to this. A cutpurse asks of a bailiff the privilege of being the first put in a new pillory. After his two companions are leaving with a rich harvest reaped from the crowd that gathers, he asks to be released. "The baylie sayde to hym: by my faythe, thou arte a good felowe . . . holde I wyll gyue the a grote to drynke, and so putte his hande in the hole of his apron. But there he founde neuer a peny. Cockes armes! (quod the bayllye) my pourse is pycked, and my moneye is gone. Syr (quod the felowe), I truste ye wyll beare me recorde, that I haue hit nat. No, by the masse, quod he, thou were on the pyllorie the whyle. Than, no force, quod the felow, and wente his waye." The same tale comes in *Pasquill's Jestes* (Hazlitt, pp. 19-21) with practically the same wording except that one speech reads: "I hope (quoth the fellow) you do not think that I haue it." The comic motive of reaching for a lost purse to get money for one of the robbers, who is able to declare his own innocence boldly, occurs in Whetstone's *Promos and Cassandra*, Part I, V, 5.

³ *Sir Th. M.*, pp. 12, 13.

Jonson makes Waspe pass this same condemnation upon himself on his return to Cokes after his release from the stocks: "He that will correct another must want fault in himself."¹ The discovery immediately after of his own loss at the hands of the cutpurses puts Waspe for once completely "out of his humour" of censure. It is in the case of Overdo, however, the officious and overweening justice of *Bartholomew Fair*, that we find the use of a man's own words to condemn him. Mrs. Overdo says of him when he is stopped in his disguise and suspected at the second robbery of Cokes,

I see he is a lewd and pernicious enormity, as Master Overdo calls him.
Overdo says in an aside,

Mine own words turned upon me like swords.²

6. In the third stanza of the ballad which Nightingale sings in *Bartholomew Fair* there is almost certainly a reference to the unusual purse-cutting incident dramatized in *Sir Thomas More*:³

Nay, once from the seat
Of judgment so great,
A judge there did lose a fair pouch of velvété.⁴

Of his four references in the ballad to specific cases of purse-cutting, Jonson throws this one back into the realm of story or chronicle by his "once," and then gives place and circumstance for the other three. Moreover, this anecdote of More had a very wide circulation under his name.⁵ In spite of Stapleton's known care in getting first-hand information,⁶ its authenticity may be questioned, for Roper does not give it, and there was a strong

¹ *B. F.*, V, 3, *Works*, II, 201.

² *B. F.*, III, 1, *Works*, II, 179.

³ Besides the incident of *Sir Thomas More*, the only Elizabethan parallel that I know to these instances of purse-cutting in law courts given by Jonson is found in Dekker's *Iests to Make You Merrie* (1607), where the story is told of an honest juror who had his pocket picked by a cutpurse whose acquittal he had just secured (Dekker, *Non-Dram. Works*, ed. Grosart, II, p. 311).

⁴ *B. F.*, III, 1, *Works*, II, 177.

⁵ It is given in Stapleton's *Tres Thomae* (1588); the life of More by B. R. (1599) in Wordsworth's *Eccl. Biog.*, Vol. II; the *Life* by Cresacre More in Jonson's lifetime; Hoddesdon's *Life* (1652); Winstanley's *England's Worthies* (1660); *Witty Apothegms delivered at Several Times and upon Several Occasions by King James, King Charls, the Marquess of Worcester, Francis Lord Bacon, and Sir Thomas Moor* (1669); quoted in Ashton's *Humour, Wit, and Satire of the Seventeenth Century*, p. 141.

⁶ Bridgett, *Life and Works of Sir Thomas More*, pp. ix, x.

tendency in the sixteenth century, and even later, to create a cycle of jests around the name of More;¹ but whatever its source, it seems to have been regarded about the time *Sir Thomas More* was written and throughout Jonson's life as an authentic anecdote of More and not to have been connected with the name of any other.

The free borrowing of songs in Elizabethan dramas and the circulation of this ballad anonymously² later may throw doubt on Jonson's authorship of it. Nightingale, however, declares that the ballad is "a spell . . . spick and span new," and this is verified by the allusion in the fourth stanza:

Nay, one without grace.
At a [far] better place
At court, and in Christmas, before the king's face.

We have here the story of Selman, who cut a purse in the King's Chapel at Whitehall on Christmas day, 1611, and was executed within two weeks. On the day of the execution Archer entered at the Stationers' his account of Selman,³ and this was published soon after with the title: *The Araidgment of John Selman, who was executed neere Charing-Crosse the 7. of January, 1612, for a felony by him committed in the King's Chappell at White-Hall upon Christmas day last, in presence of the King and divers of the nobility*; London, 1612. According to the account of Selman's trial, Sir Francis Bacon in condemning the prisoner said: ". . .

¹ Chaps. xii and xiii of Stapleton's *Tres Thomae*, are filled with apothegms and anecdotes. Pp. 98-108 of B. R.'s *Life* in Wordsworth's *Eccl. Biog.*, Vol. II, are a veritable jest-book, and of the stories there given at least two occur in jest-books, that of More's treatment of a man who advertised for a lost purse in *Mery Tales and Quicke Answeres*, XV (ed. Hazlitt), and that of choosing the smallest woman as the smallest evil (also in Stapleton, chap. xiii) in *A C Mery Talys*, LXIII (ed. Oosterley). All the early lives repeat some anecdotes besides that of the cutpurse which are of doubtful authenticity. Moreover, there are scattering references to More in jest-books, as to More's servants in *XII Mery Jests of the Wyddow Edyth*. Cf. also Bridgett's *Life* (p. 38, n.) for such a version of the "Erasmus aut diabolus" anecdote, given also by Cresacre More. Cf. Collier, *Bibl. Acct. Eng. Lang.*, Vol. I, p. 404, and Vol. II, p. 124, for other examples, given here, however, without references. See *Witty Apothegms* mentioned just above.

² Collier publishes it, giving no author, with five additional stanzas in *A Book of Roxburghe Ballads* (1847), pp. 271 ff., under the title that Jonson gives, "A Caveat for Cut-purses. To the Tune of Packington's Pound." Alden, *Bartholomew Fair*, *Yale Studies in Eng.*, XXV, pp. 192, 193, shows that the addition was made after the production of *Barth. Fair*. The anonymous "Caveat for Cut-purses" in the Roxburghe Collection of the British Museum must be the original of Collier's version. Chandler, *Literature of Roguery*, mentions a "Caveat for Cut-purses" which he does not seem to connect with Jonson, but which is perhaps the same Roxburghe version.

³ Arber's *Transcript*, III, p. 474.

I cannot choose but place this in the third rank [of sins] all being considered the time, the place, and person there present," etc.¹ In the same year Rowlands wrote two short epigrams² on Selman's death, which are almost made up of phrases from the title and matter of *The Araignment*. It is noticeable that Jonson stresses the same points of Selman's enormity that are stressed by Bacon, by Rowlands, and in the title of *The Araignment*.³ Thus not only does the recentness of Selman's deed celebrated in the ballad indicate that the ballad was written by Jonson for the play, but the exactness of the reference would indicate a like exactness for the allusion to the "seat of judgment," and render it more probable that we have here a reference to the anecdote of *Sir Thomas More*.

A further parallel between the two plays, from which, however, little can be inferred as to the indebtedness of Jonson, is found in the introduction into each, with many corresponding circumstances, of a play within a play. The puppet-show⁴ in *Bartholomew Fair*, Cokes's large license of comment upon it, Busy's entering upon the scene and turning the performance to a debate with the puppets, and the closing of the puppet-show without completion may be compared with the introduction of the play⁵ in *Sir Thomas More*, More's comments upon the play, his taking a part in it and improvising, and the dismissal of the players before the play has been completed. The puppet-show in *Bartholomew Fair* and the morality in *Sir Thomas More* both furnish in tone and spirit a comic contrast, like a sort of anti-masque, to the plays into which they are introduced. Like the

¹ Chambers, *Book of Days*, II, p. 670. Pp. 669, 670, are given to an account of Selman, in which Bacon's speech is quoted, at least in part (with variations from Brydges, *Brit. Bibl.*, I, pp. 537, 538), and the reference in Jonson's ballad is pointed out. There are notices of *The Araignment* in Sidney Lee's *Life of Shakespeare*, p. 402; in Granger's *Biog. Hist. of Eng.*, II, p. 209; and in Caulfield's *Rem. Pers. from Reign of Edw. III to the Revolution*, I, p. 71. Brotanek discovered a reference to the incident in a letter of Chamberlain for December 31, 1611 (*Die engl. Maskenspiele*, pp. 347, 348, and *Cal. State Papers, Dom. 1611-18*, p. 104).

² *The Knave of Harts* (1612), p. 46 (*Works of Rowlands*, Hunterian Club, Vol. II).

³ There is no doubt a reference to the same incident in Jonson's masque of *Love Restored*. Robin Goodfellow, in the course of a long speech, says (*Works*, III, 85): "One of the black-guard . . . was groping of me as nimbly as the Christmas cut-purse." See Fleay, *Hist. of Stage*, p. 182; *Biog. Chron. Eng. Drama*, II, pp. 7-9; Brotanek, *Die engl. Maskenspiele*, pp. 346-48. Brotanek rejoices over his discovery of Chamberlain's reference to the cutpurse. He was not so fortunate as to read Chambers.

⁴ *B. F.*, V, 3.

⁵ *Sir Th. M.*, pp. 55-66.

list of plays offered by the players in *Sir Thomas More* is the list of puppet-shows which Lanthorn Leatherhead says that he has produced in his day.¹

Again, the request of the stage-keeper in the induction of *Bartholomew Fair* at the opening of the play—

Gentlemen, have a little patience, they are e'en upon coming instantly. He that should begin the play, Master Littlewit, the proctor, has a stitch new fallen in his black silk stocking; 'twill be drawn up ere you can tell twenty—

may have been suggested by the request of "Inclination the Vise" made just as the players are about to present *The Mariage of Witt and Wisedome* before Sir Thomas More and his guests:

We would desire your honor but to stay a little; one of my fellowes is but run to Oagles for a long beard for young Witt, and heele be heere presently.

In each play the remark is preliminary to some jesting about the play that follows. In *Bartholomew Fair* the remark also prepares for some satire and renders it dramatically possible for Jonson to introduce some discussion of the material of comedy; in *Sir Thomas More* the playwright is enabled to present More as an improviser and to break off the inserted play before it becomes too tedious.²

It is worthy of note that the spirit in which Jonson deals with his characters in general, as in the case of Waspe and Justice Overdo, is found in a less bitter form in the play of *Sir Thomas More* when More overthrows Justice Suresbie. It is also found in More's treatment of Faulkner.³ Faulkner, a servant and ruffian, almost as perverse, impudent, and irascible as Waspe, who wears his hair long and has made a vow to cut it only "when the humors are purgd, not theis three years," and who cares not for consequences, "so it bee in my humor, or the Fates becon to mee,"

¹ *B. F.*, V, 1.

² In the *Masque of Christmas*, produced about two years after *Bartholomew Fair*, Jonson has Carol cry out at the moment when Christmas is about to introduce his children in their appearance before the King, "Why, here be half of the properties forgotten, father" (*Works*, III, p. 107), and then just as in *Sir Thomas More* there is some merriment produced by the discussion of the situation and by the provision made for the emergency.

³ *Sir Th. M.*, pp. 42-46, 50-53.

is brought before More for rioting. More, by sending him to prison till he shall cut his hair, purges him of that humor.¹

The source from which the author of *Sir Thomas More* drew the material for the pocket-picking scene must be considered in its relation to *Bartholomew Fair* before it can be safely inferred that Jonson was indebted to the play. This source was of course the famous anecdote given by most of More's biographers in almost the same words. In Cresacre More's *Life* there is essentially this account.²

More, having heard "one of the ancient Iustices" chide the losers of purses, "saying that their negligence was cause, that there were so manie Cutt purses brought thither . . . sent for one of the chiefe Cutt purses that was in the prison" the night after and promised to "stand his good friend, if he would cutt that Iustice's purse, whilst he sate the next day on the Benche." The thief the next day, asking to speak in private to one of the bench to excuse himself, whispered in the judge's ear and cut his purse. More, upon a signal from the thief, moved the bench to give alms to a "needie fellowe" there.

When the olde man came to open his purse, he sees it cutt away, and wondering, sayd, that he had it, when he came to sit there that morning. Sir Thomas replyed in a pleasant manner; what? will you charge anie of us with fellonie? He beginning to be angrie and ashamed of the matter, Sir Thomas calles the cutt purse and willes him to giue him his purse againe, counselling the good man hereafter not to be so bitter a censurer of innocent mens negligence, when as himself could not keepe his purse safe in that open assemblie.³

The general outline of Jonson's plot might as readily have been suggested by the *Life* as by the play of *Sir Thomas More*. Even the ground on which Suresbie and Waspe condemn the

¹ With the scene in *Ev. M. out of His H.* (V, 2), where Macilente causes Saviolina to declare that she can detect the gentleman beneath the clownish action of the genuine clown, Sogliardo, and thus brings her to shame, may be compared, for similarity of test and contrast in result, the scenes in *Sir Thomas More* (pp. 41, 42, 46-48) where More dresses himself as his servant and his servant as himself to test the ability of Erasmus to discern the real gentleman and scholar from the clown.

² I use Cresacre More's version, because it is most accessible, and, being in English, is readily compared with the plays. It seems to be a free translation of the anecdote as given by Stapleton, *Tres Thomae*, chap. xiii, and, like the other versions, differs from *Tres Thomae* in none of the important details.

³ Cresacre More, *The Life of Sir Thomas More* (1726), pp. 86-88; Dyce's edition of *Sir Thomas More*, p. 13, n. 1.

losers of purses—their negligence as the cause of cutpurses—and the moral that is brought home to Suresbie and Waspe, are here. On the other hand, the whole spirit of Jonson's treatment is found in the play and is missing in the *Life*, and the most important parallel between the two plays, the "humour" of the overconfident man and boaster who seeks his trouble, is wanting in the *Life*. Besides, the resemblance of language is closer in the case of *Bartholomew Fair* and the play *Sir Thomas More* than in that of *Bartholomew Fair* and the *Life of Sir Thomas More*, and there are many minor details found in both plays and not in the *Life*. Evidently Jonson took the play to build upon.

As regards the similarity between *Sir Thomas More* and *Bartholomew Fair*, it should be remarked, however, that many of these parallelisms in motive reach back to the motive very common in folk and rogue tales—the ability of the shrewd thief to perform any robbery, no matter how great the odds against him. In these stories, especially the pure thief stories, there are usually several common motives. The thief must repeat the performance of a robbery, often of the same person and usually more than once, the difficulty increasing with each feat; his life is at stake for his past deeds; a great reward, usually life, is promised in case of success; the thief has confidence in his power and a roguish zest in the performance of his task; the man to be robbed is watching and equally confident; and the thief always succeeds, to the amazement of his victim. The presence of these elements in the two plays is clear. Indeed, *Bartholomew Fair* comes very near in many details to the "Master Thief" branch, one of the earliest and best versions of which is an Elizabethan tale, No. XIII of the *Merie Tales of Skelton*. We have in *Bartholomew Fair* the repeated robberies, though only one is a set task. Moreover, the thefts of the hat, coat, and sword that Cokes is wearing, and of the license from Waspe's box without the box and without Waspe's knowledge of the theft are like many incidents in the "Master Thief" and related stories¹ in having the same types of character and situation and the same tricks and methods of the rogue.

¹ Compare the Swalpo jest of stealing a man's coat off his back cited above, and the theft of the breeches in "The Two Thieves" (Groome, *Gypsy Folk-Tales*, p. 41). Waspe tells Cokes, "You'd lose your breech an 'twere loose" (*B. F.*, III, 1, *Works*, II, 179). With the

Again, Greene's works furnish some passages similar to parts of *Bartholomew Fair*, and Jonson probably got some suggestions from Greene for the treatment of Overdo and Waspe.

A Disputation betweene a Hee Conny-catcher and a Shee Conny-catcher (1592) has a story called "A pleasant Tale of a Country Farmer," etc., which is similar to the jest of *Sir Thomas More* and *Bartholomew Fair*:

It was told me for a truth that not long since here in London, there laie a country Farmar, with diuers of his neighbours about Law matters, amongst whom, one of them going to Westminster Hall, was by a Foyst stript of all the pence in his purse, and comming home, made great complaint of his misfortune: some lamented his losse, and others exclaimed against the Cutpurses, but this Farmer he laught loudly at the matter, and said such fooles as could not keep their purses no surer, were well serued, and for my part quoth hee, I so much scorne the Cutpurses, that I would thank him hartily that would take paines to foyst mine: well saies his neighbor you know not what hands Fortune may light in your owne lap: tush quoth the Farmar, heeres fortie pounds in this purse in gold, the proudest Cutpurse in England win and weare it:¹ as thus he boasted, there stood a subtill Foyst by and heard all, smiling to himselfe at the folly of the proude Farmar, and vowed to haue his purse, or venture his necke for it.

After vainly trying for some time to rob the farmer, the cutpurse secures his arrest on a false charge. A pretended quarrel is picked with the officers of the law by the cutpurses, and a riot follows in which the farmer is robbed and afterward carried to prison. A note is sent by the cutpurse to say that he mistook the man,

which note the Officer shewed him, and bad him pay his fees and go his waies: the poore Country-man was content with that, and put his hand in his pocket to feele for his purse, and God wot there was none

robbery of Waspe's box compare Grimm's story of the Master Thief's stealing the horse and leaving the rider in the saddle. Chandler, *Literature of Roguery*, pp. 82 f., comments on the connection of the "Master Thief" stories with rogue literature; Cosquin, *Contes populaires de Lorraine*, II, pp. 271-81, 364, 365, and Groome, *Gypsy Folk-Tales*, pp. 41-53, give versions of the "Master Thief" and discuss it. Cf. Campbell, *Seven Sages of Rome*, pp. lxxxv-xc for the various versions of the related "Rhampsinitus" story.

¹In *The Thirde Part of Conny-catching* (1592), "How a Gentleman was craftily deceiued of a Chaine," etc., the gentleman, after a cutpurse who is cultivating his acquaintance "tolde a very solemne tale, of villanies and knaueries in his owne profession"—as Lifter and Nightingale do,—grows fearful and puts his chain and purse in his sleeve, saying, "If the Conny-catcher get it héere, let him not spare it." The cutpurse smiles at this "rash securitie." Accomplices pick a quarrel with the cutpurse, and in the tumult that follows, the gentleman is robbed, just as the farmer is robbed here, and as Waspe is in *Bartholomew Fair* (Greene's *Works* [Grosart] X, 179, and *B. F.*, IV, 3).

and with that fetching a great sigh he sayd, alas maisters I am vndone, my purse in this fraie is taken out of my pocket, and ten pounds in gold in it besides white money. . . . Well, saies his neighbor, who shall smile at you now? the other day when I lost my purse you laught at mee: the Farmer brooke all, and sat malecontent, and borrowed money of his neighbors to paye the Sargiant, and had a learning I beleeeue [n]euer after to braue the cutpurse.¹

We have here the confidence of the farmer and his boasting, in the vein of Suresbie, Cokes, and Waspe, that he cannot be robbed; the acceptance of the challenge by a cutpurse, who like Edgworth overhears; the free-for-all fight planned by the cutpurses just as in the robbery of Waspe; and in the end the victim sitting malcontent like Waspe, his folly brought home to him. This, however, while offering some new parallels to *Bartholomew Fair*, is not so close to Jonson as is the anecdote of Sir Thomas More.

Alden² points out the resemblance between the account of Nightingale and Edgworth's performances and Greene's *Thirde Part of Conny-catching*, "An other Tale of a coosening companion," etc., where two cutpurses sing ballads while their companions rob the crowd. The result also is somewhat similar in the two cases. Greene goes on to say:

But one angrie fellow, more impacient then al the rest, he falles vpon the ballade singer, and beating him with his fists well fauouredly, sayes if he had not listened his singing, he had not lost his purse, and therefore woulde not be otherwise perswaded, but that they two and the cutpurses were compacted together. The rest that had lost their purses likewise . . . begin to tug & hale the ballad singers, when one after one the false knaues began to shrinke awaie with y^e purses. By meanes of some officer then being there presēt, the two roges wer had before a Iustice.³

In exactly the same way, Overdo, who by his harangue collects a crowd and unwittingly causes Cokes to be robbed the first time, is accused of being an accomplice of the cutpurses and is beaten by Waspe, whereupon the cutpurse escapes; and after the second robbery of Cokes Overdo is put in the stocks under sus-

¹ Greene's *Works* (Grosart), X, pp. 213-16.

² *Barth. Fair* (*Yale Studies in Eng.* XXV), p. 193.

³ Greene's *Works* (Grosart), X, pp. 162, 163.

picion of complicity. Thus Edgworth remarks when Overdo begins, "Slight, he will call company, you shall see, and put us into doings presently;" and Waspe in beating Overdo cries:¹

Here is a rogue is the bawd o' the cut-purses whom I will beat to begin with. . . . You are the Patrico, are you? the patriarch of the cut-purses? You share, sir, they say; let them share this with you.²

Besides the *Sir Thomas More* there is another play, of uncertain date, that may offer parallels to the cutpurse scenes of *Bartholomew Fair*.³ In the play introduced in the fifth act of Middleton's *Mayor of Queenborough* there is a resemblance to the cutpurse scenes of *Bartholomew Fair*. This play and the one in *Sir Thomas More* are introduced similarly, as Fleay points out. A list of plays is given from which one is chosen, a giver of a feast takes a part in the performance, and the play is not completed. The play in *The Mayor of Queenborough*, however, is more like the puppet-show in *Bartholomew Fair*, in that to the clown Simon as to the clown Cokes everything seems very real, and each enters into the burlesque with a naïve faith in the high seriousness of the scenes. There is a similarity also in the bringing of a Puritan upon the scene in each, and in the representation on the stage of the Puritans' hostility to plays. In the play, *The Cheater and the Clown*,⁵ chosen by the Mayor of Queenborough, there are two cheaters and a clown. The clown, "but a fool of a yeoman's eldest son," like Cokes has two purses, and, keeping his hands on them, dares the cheaters with a boastful self-confidence:

¹ *B. F.*, II, 1, *Works*, II, pp. 168, 170.

² Greene also furnishes a fairly close parallel to the title of Jonson's ballad, "A Caveat for Cut-purses." In *The Second Part of Conny-catching* (*Works*, X, pp. 106, 107), there are the words: "It boots not to tell their course . . . at Bartholomew faire. . . . Therefore let all men take this caveat . . . that they tak[e] great care for their purse;" and (p. 120), "Therefore let this be a caveat to all . . . that they beware of the gentleman Lift."

³ Autolycus of *The Winter's Tale* belongs to the same general class as the rogues of *Bartholomew Fair*. Like Lanthorn Leatherhead, he is a chapman who has given puppet-shows on biblical subjects; he has "compassed a motion of the Prodigal Son." Like Nightingale he enters singing his songs and his chapman cries, robs the clown once, appears soon after before his victim again, warns him against cozeners, sings ballads to his victims, in which they take a part, gives a list of ballads, sells his ballads to the clown, who, like Cokes, "would not stir his petticoats till he had both tune and words," etc. The interest aroused by *The Winter's Tale* in these typical vagabonds may have influenced Jonson.

⁴ *Biog. Chron. Eng. Drama*, II, 104.

⁵ *M. of Q.*, V, 1.

They say there is a foolish kind of thing called a cheater abroad, that will gull any yeoman's son of his purse, and laugh in his face like an Irishman. I would fain meet with some of these creatures: I am in as good state to be gulled now as ever I was in my life, for I have two purses at this time about me, and I would fain be acquainted with that rascal that would take one of them now.

The clown is, of course, quickly robbed, and he cries before he discovers the robbery, "Still would I meet with these things called cheaters," just as Suresbie repeats his boast after he has been robbed. Then Simon, the mayor, censures the clown in the manner of Suresbie and Waspe:

A scurvy hobby-horse, that could not leave his money with me, having such a charge about him! A pox on thee for an ass!

And Simon insists on taking the clown's place in the play, daring the cheaters to rob him.

Come on, sir, [he cries,] let us see what your knaveship can do at me now: you must not think you have a clown on hand.

Simon's scorn and boasting, like Suresbie's and Waspe's, are soon punished. The cheater, throwing meal into Simon's face, takes his purse, and Simon soon learns that the players were genuine thieves.¹

We have here the same general conception as in *Bartholomew Fair*, one stupid clown's seeking to pit himself against cheaters, only to lose, and a shrewder clown's censuring the first and, with still greater self-confidence and boasting, essaying to guard against the same fate, only to fall a more notable victim. In the representation of the first robbery as well as the second, and in the types of characters and the kind of incidents with which the motive

¹Greene in *The Second Part of Conny-catching*, under "A merry tale how a Miller had his purse cut in New gate market" (Grosart, X, 110-13), tells how one cutpurse throws meal into his fellow's eyes, and how the victim is robbed on coming to help the cutpurse get the meal out of his eyes. That Middleton may have gotten a suggestion from Greene for *The Mayor of Queenborough* is rendered probable by the fact that in *Your Five Gallants*, IV, 8, he has another parallel to Greene. Pyamont comes in cursing his luck for going to the aid of Pursenet, who had pretended to swoon, since by it he lost his purse, from which he had not once before taken his hand. Greene, *Second Part of Conny-catching*, in "A kinde conceipt of a Foist performed in Paules" (Grosart, X, pp. 114 ff.), tells how a farmer who has kept his hand on his purse is robbed by one cutpurse while he goes to the help of another who has pretended to faint. In *The Winter's Tale*, when Autolycus robs the clown first (IV, 3), he accomplishes the robbery by lying down as if he were in a faint as the result of a beating and thus calling the clown to his aid. Chandler, *Lit. of Rog.*, p. 237, calls attention to the parallel between *The Winter's Tale* and Greene.

is worked out in *The Mayor of Queenborough*, there is a greater likeness to *Bartholomew Fair* than to *Sir Thomas More*. The plays, however, have only the general motive in common; there is none of the correspondence in language and detail that exists between *Bartholomew Fair* and *Sir Thomas More*. Consequently, even if it were certain that *The Mayor of Queenborough* in some form came before *Bartholomew Fair*, Jonson could not have gone to it for anything more than the suggestion to combine certain typical characters with a situation borrowed from *Sir Thomas More*.

After Jonson had written *Bartholomew Fair* and possibly after Middleton had written *The Mayor of Queenborough*, the two great dramatizers of purse-cutting combined their labors in *The Widow* (1615-16)¹ to produce another episode of purse-cutting, with much of its material recalling the same scene of *Sir Thomas More* that Jonson had used in *Bartholomew Fair*. The situation in this scene of *The Widow* (the latter half of IV, 2) is that of *Promos and Cassandra*, Part I, V, 5. In each play the quack surgeon, a barber in one and an empiric in the other, uses his shop and trade to draw victims for his purse-cutting. In *Promos and Cassandra* the patient's eyes are first treated, and, as he is robbed, he is told to keep them tightly closed; then his teeth receive attention, the barber commenting on his foul breath. After the robbery the barber deplores the loss of the purse and accuses one who has just left the room. The incidents of *The Widow* are the same, except that the episodes of the eyes and teeth are parceled out to the justice and his clerk, whom the quack and his assistant respectively rob, and that the barber accuses the actual thief while the quack of *The Widow* accuses a stranger. But the discovery of the loss in *The Widow*, the censure of the loser, and the return of that censure upon the censurer are from *Sir Thomas More* and *Bartholomew Fair*. As the foolish justice Brandino goes to pay the quack, he cries out with the same words—natural enough, however—that Suresbie and Cokes used, "My purse is gone." Then the censure of the master by the servant as

¹ What follows seems to me to support the assignment of this date to *The Widow*, and perhaps to strengthen the claim that Johnson had a part in the play.

in *Bartholomew Fair* follows. The resemblances of the following to what has been given are evident enough:

Bran[*dino*]. 'Tis gone, i' faith; I've been among some rascals.

Mar[*tino*, the clerk]. And that's a thing

I ever gave you warning of, master; you care not

What company you run into.

Bran. Lend me some money; chide me anon, I prithee.

Mar. My purse is gone too!

Bran. How?

I'll ne'er take warning more of thee while I live then;

Thou art an hypocrite, and art not fit

To give good counsel to thy master, that

Canst not keep from ill company thyself.

Lat[*rocinio*, the quack]. This is most strange, sir;¹ both your purses gone!

Mar. Sir, I'd my hand on mine when I came in.

Lat. . . . I ha' known purses gone,

And the thief stand and look one full i' th' face,

As I may do your worship and your man now.²

The end of the scene and of the cutpurse's part is an adaptation from *Bartholomew Fair*. There Justice Overdo, in one of his foolish impulses, gives Quarlous his hand and seal to an unfilled warrant,³ which Quarlous uses to release Mistress Grace from the power of her guardian, Overdo himself, at the same time forcing her to pay him for this good deed.⁴ So Justice Brandino, when he cannot pay the quack, gives him his hand and seal, which are used to release from prison a fellow rogue and Martia, who has been committed by the justice; while the quack gets in recompense for his charity all the money that Martia has.

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¹ Compare the Mayor's use of the same expression when Suresbie discovers the loss of his purse, p. 7 above.

² Compare Lifter's statement to his prospective victim, Suresbie, *Sir Th. M.*, p. 10.

There be, sir, diuers very cunning fellowes,
That, while you stand and looke them in the face,
Will haue your purses.

³ *B. F.*, V, 2.

⁴ *B. F.*, V, 3, *Works*, II, p. 209.